

# EXECUTIVE STATEMENT

Note: Appendix M: Stakeholder Comments is located at the following website: <http://www.newportbeachca.gov/index.aspx?page=1333>

## *E.1 Plan Process and Features*

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*A*s highlighted by the emerging drought conditions, it's likely that we'll see an increase in regulation of water resources.

This not only includes water supply, but the related issues of water quality, flood control and habitat protection. New top-down regulations could inhibit the ability of local agencies to craft locally-based and locally-supported actions.

An intensive series of meetings with individual stakeholder agencies in the Central Orange County Region facilitated identification of over 130 projects addressing water-related challenges (flood management, water quality, water supply or habitat). A ranking methodology has been devised to identify those projects that will have the greatest impact toward re-establishing healthy, stable hydrologic conditions for our region.

Implementation costs for the 130 projects are roughly estimated to cost well in excess of \$400 million dollars over the next 20 years. Assuming that a funding stream of about \$20 million per year

can be arranged, implementation of these projects would not only enhance our water resources and protect our quality of life, but would also be an important economic boost for our region. Central Orange County's wealth of university, professional consultant and entrepreneurial expertise could be mobilized to create new industries to address our watershed issues and could propel this region into a leadership position in green technologies.

The State of California recognizes the need to guide and support local efforts to utilize water resources wisely. It has established the Integrated Regional Water Management Program to encourage local agencies to work cooperatively in managing local and imported water supplies for the purpose of improving the quality, quantity, and reliability of those supplies. One of the foundational elements is the local adoption of an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) that promotes:

1. Meaningful stakeholder collaboration in selecting and prioritizing water resource projects based on meeting local and regional objectives,
2. A process to interlink the water resources projects so that the projects work together and promote long-term effective implementation, and
3. Work Plans to move projects forward to implementation.

Our Region's willingness to constructively grapple with these central issues may set us apart from previous planning efforts. The heart of our Plan is a new planning process called the Dynamic Planning Approach. It explicitly recognizes that a water resource plan must accommodate the regional as well as the local perspective:

- Local projects need to accommodate regional objectives, and
- Regional priorities must recognize local objectives.

Because of the complexity of the challenges in our Region, local expertise and control — in cooperation with regional support — is required to generate and maintain sufficient momentum to create a successful water resource management program.

Not only does our planning approach promote regional and local cooperation, it also explicitly encourages it through its project prioritization methodology, integration planning and project work plans. Furthermore, it promotes a linkage among planners, ecologists and engineers. Making the connection between planning and engineering is especially important because grant funding is primarily focused on implementing projects, and therefore, engineers will need to comprehend the over-arching planning objectives when writing the scope-of-work for proposed projects. Because of the importance of the Dynamic Planning Approach to our Plan, a summary of the process is provided here in the Executive Statement and then fully developed in Chapter 4.

One note on the title of our plan: As one of the significant considerations in our regional planning and project activities for the Central Orange County Region is our 12-mile long coastline, the Plan's title is the **Integrated Regional and Coastal Water Management Plan** (IRCWMP or Plan). Figure E.1 shows the Central Orange County Region.

### Prioritizing Projects to Meet Local and Regional Objectives

While good IRWM plans have been prepared for "limited-issue" watersheds where regulation is the driving force (for example, protect the Coho salmon) or where the need is obvious (for example, improve water supplies), the State has not yet seen an example of a comprehensive water resource plan to address the complex inter-related water-resource issues in such a highly urbanized setting. The State realizes that it cannot simply promulgate regulations formulated in Sacramento and expect effective implementation at the local level. Rather, the State is looking to local stakeholders to devise a water resource plan that is feasible to implement, meets local objectives and accommodates state objectives. As a starting point for addressing regional and local coordination, we considered two examples that are now occurring in Central Orange County.

- The best example of innovative cooperation between regional and local agencies is the Nitrogen and Selenium Management Program (NSMP) facilitated by the Orange County Watershed and Coastal Resources Division, which is performing investigations and pilot studies to find ways to deal with selenium contamination. The NSMP stakeholder group has

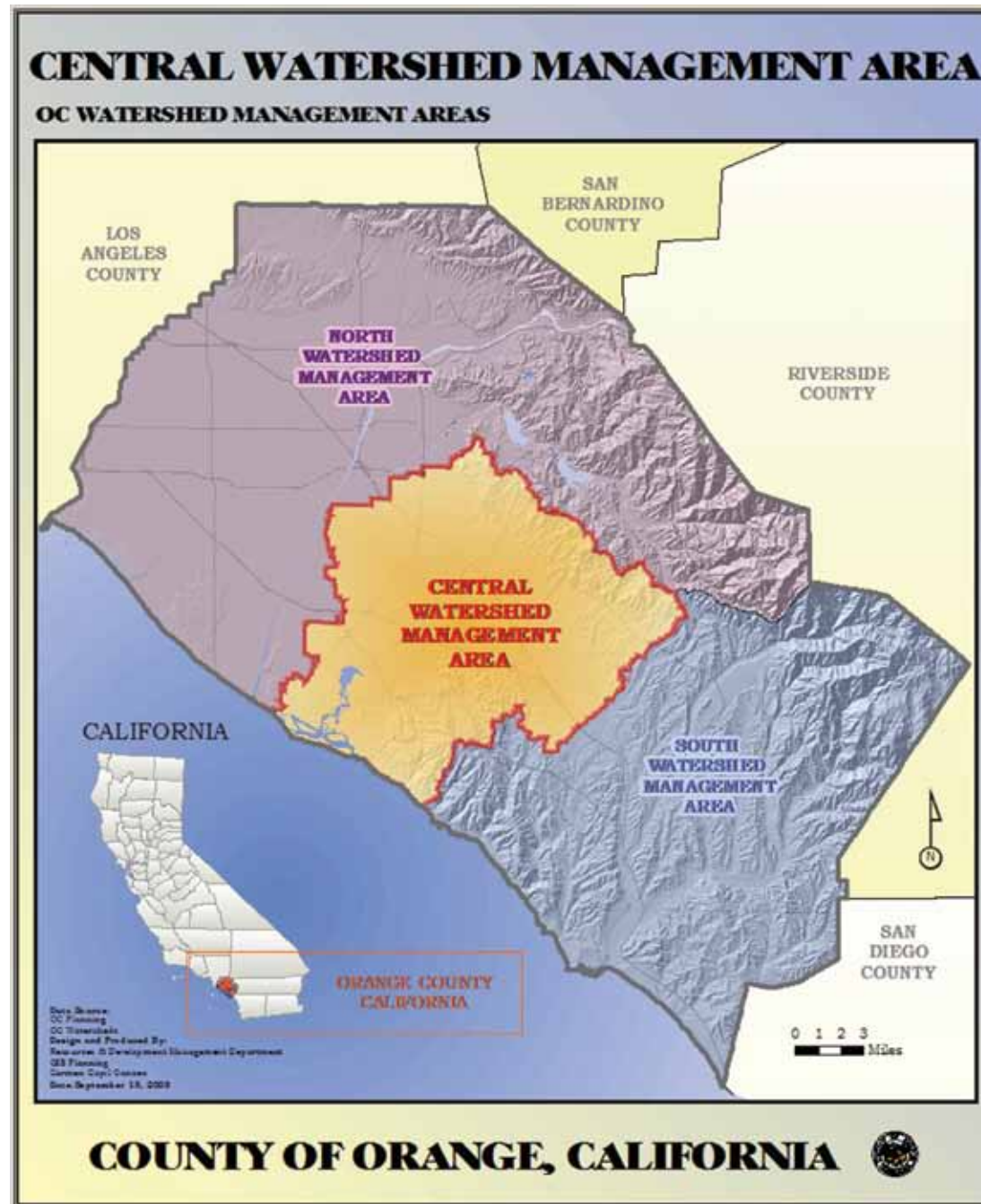


Figure E.1  
Orange County  
Three Watershed  
Management Areas

forged an alliance with the California Regional Water Quality Control Board (Santa Ana Region) to support funding and development of a Selenium Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). The alliance is built upon an understanding that because the TMDL will be based on scientifically-defensible evidence, the parties will support the TMDL recommendations once they are developed.

- The other emerging example of cooperation between regional and local stakeholders is the planning for the Bight '08 coastal resource studies as focused on the Areas of Special Biological Significance (ASBS). This is an unprecedented proceeding where the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project ([www.sccwrp.org](http://www.sccwrp.org)) is facilitating discussion between the State Water Resources Control Board and the cities of Newport Beach, Laguna Beach, San Diego and Malibu, the County of Los Angeles, the US Navy, and the Irvine Company to develop a near-shore monitoring program. In this case, the geographically separated stakeholders have co-federated in order to address common challenges posed by ASBS issues. The parties agree that the results of this monitoring program will be the basis for discharge regulations for dry and wet-weather direct discharges to the ASBS.

These ground-breaking examples of regional/local consensus-building regarding water resource issues illustrate several important principles:

- Effective problem solving is fostered when local and regional experts cooperate to find approaches that will produce the best scientific results.
- For complex water resource problems, practical solutions require scientific, engineering, planning, environmental and economic perspectives.
- A stakeholder group that demonstrates an understanding of the scientific, engineering, planning, environmental and economic aspects of a water resource issue, and is collectively able to explain it effectively to a wide spectrum of interest groups, is most likely to achieve success.
- The very act of the various stakeholder groups meeting together helps each individual interest understand how the other interests think and speak.

This IRCWMP uses our prior watershed successes to assist in defining an effective stakeholder process where water resource planning, engineering, environmental, economic and political perspectives can be reconciled, and as such, this Plan represents a breakthrough toward comprehensive management of watershed resources.

The Newport Bay Watershed Executive Committee, established in 1983, will provide leadership in determining water resource priorities for this region. In 2008, the Executive Committee's role was formally expanded to include governance of the IRCWMP. This

committee provides guidance for our watershed program, including reviewing and approving priority projects, directing staff on which grant programs to pursue, reviewing activities of the various watershed committees and directing staff to periodically update the IRCWMP (see Section 1.7). The actions of the Watershed Executive Committee, along with active and meaningful contributions from our spectrum of stakeholders, are key to the effectiveness of our watershed program.

### Inter-linking Water Resource Projects

The State is still wrestling with the question of how to integrate projects in a watershed-wide manner and has asked local planning efforts to also tackle this question. To put this into the simplest terms, how does a proponent define a water resource project such that it helps build a healthy and self-sustaining watershed, supports other water resource projects, and does not harm other water resource efforts? The Central Orange County IRCWMP makes the first concerted attempt toward quantifying integration by defining four types of regional integration and thirteen types of local integration (Chapter 4). It also describes hydrologic and ecosystem-based processes that drive the system and thus must be considered when defining integration. (Chapter 5). Finally, it includes specific examples of proposed local projects as a foundation for future project integration.. (Chapter 10).

### Watershed Work Plan

As a fundamental step toward moving projects off the “wish-list” category and into a position for funding consideration, each

project proponent is required to prepare a Work Plan to delineate all the steps and a timeline needed for implementation including: the planning concept, integration planning, community support, funding options including leveraging local assets, environmental and construction documents, permits, monitoring, and operations and maintenance. As the Work Plan becomes better defined, the ranking of the project increases accordingly.

### Watershed Vision and the Dynamic Planning Approach

Through a facilitated Watershed Stakeholder Committee visioning process (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.1.4), community stakeholders have defined this common Vision for our Region:

“Public and private lands in the Central Orange County Watershed Management Area sustain healthy watershed ecosystems, protect critical habitat and species, and allow the community to enjoy its connection with nature; and at the same time safeguard the health and welfare of the community, maintain immediate and long-term reliability of water supplies, and protect the value of property.”

A key idea that comes out of our Vision is that projects implemented in our watershed must work to support a healthy and self-sustaining ecosystem; in other words, our water resources, flood control, water quality, water supply and habitat systems are functioning well and in balance with each other.

To this end, this plan uses both a regional, top-down approach and a local, bottom-up planning approach. For the top-down perspective, the Plan uses the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’

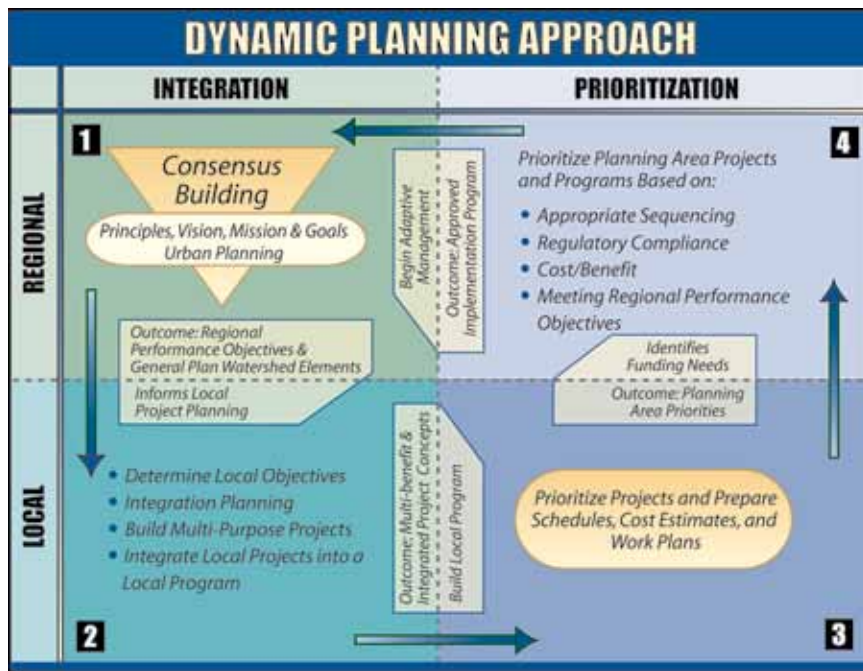


Figure E.2 Dynamic Planning Approach

“Watershed Systems Approach” that has been infused with both regional and local planning and engineering expertise. The Corps’ Watershed Systems Approach is an ecosystem-based watershed planning methodology adapted in this Plan to provide a science-based planning methodology and form a connection with the federal approach to resource management. This was complemented by a concurrent bottom-up, stakeholder-driven project planning process that capitalizes on local expertise and gives voice to local concerns and objectives. These two processes are fused together through Regional Performance Objectives (Chapters 6, 7 and 8)

that represent consensus-building toward the watershed Vision for the water resources of our hydrologic system. This balancing of regional versus local interests, and long-term versus immediate-term requirements, enables progress towards achieving the Vision. The efficiency and effectiveness of that progress depends on the quality and intensity of stakeholder collaboration.

Figure E.2, Dynamic Planning Approach, illustrates the linkages between regional and local perspectives and the integration and prioritization processes. Integration planning seeks inter-connections (spatial, temporal, funding, monitoring, etc.) between projects. Prioritization deals with determining an effective way to implement projects that includes consideration of evolving economic, political and community interests.

This Plan makes important advancements in water resource planning on a number of fronts, especially with regard to integration planning. In that regard, this Plan explicitly recognizes that the long-term success of our program depends on watershed objectives ultimately being incorporated into General Plans and other resource management plans. Long-term success of this Plan is supported by inclusion of a Regional Performance Objective to institute a watershed-wide science education program in our local high schools and colleges, so that we can home-grow the next generation of watershed scientists, planners, engineers, economists and ecologists.

One important aspect of water resource management that has not yet been addressed in the IRCWMP is how to inter-link planning efforts to adjacent regions. For South Orange County and Central Orange County, the inter-linkage is provided by the Orange County Watershed and Coastal Resources Division, which facilitates both plans. The potential inter-linkages between Central Orange County and the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA) to the north are still being explored. While representatives from Orange County have participated in the SAWPA IRWMP process, due to staffing constraints there has only been marginal coordination among the project managers for the Central Orange County and SAWPA efforts. There are several important commonalities between the two Regions that at a minimum need to be addressed, including the groundwater basin managed by Orange County Water District and common habitat areas managed under the Natural Community Conservation Plan/Habitat Conservation Plan.

## *E.2 Plan Outcomes and Benefits*

- This Plan has initially identified over 130 water resource projects that cover every area within our Region based on extensive conversations among the stakeholders (See Appendix A). The Plan highlights critical projects in each area of the Region. (Chapter 10).
- All identified projects have been scored and ranked based on the ability of a project to address multiple water resource issues in an

integrated manner (Chapter 11). Concept-level work plans have been prepared for the top twenty ranked projects along with schedules.

- The Plan is based upon a breakthrough planning process, the Dynamic Planning Approach, an important step forward in encouraging local and regional coordination (Chapter 4).
- The Plan provides for the Watershed Executive Committee's enhanced role in directing the course of water resource planning in Central Orange County.
- The Plan promotes identification of potential water resource projects. It also provides a template for invigorating the consensus-building process within the Watershed Stakeholder Committee, which will aid in the identification of these projects.
- The Plan promotes effective project implementation by encouraging integration planning and the preparation of project work plans.
- The Plan makes important contributions toward integration planning by defining four regional and thirteen types of integration (Chapter 4).
- The Plan makes an important contribution toward defining priority projects in terms of Regional Performance Objectives (Chapters 6, 7 and 8).

## *References*

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- Southern California Coastal Water Research Project, Bight Regional Monitoring Project [www.sccwr.org/view.php?id=95](http://www.sccwr.org/view.php?id=95)